



Charles Bert

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To: Gil Haselberger/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Linda Meyer/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Catherine Massimino/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Sylvia Burges/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Andrew Boyd/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Wallace Reid/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Julie Vergeront/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Steve Body/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, John Keenan/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Mark Masarik/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Doug Cole/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Mark Macintyre/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Kristine Koch/R10/USEPA/US@EPA

cc:

Subject: Idaho St. Journal article on Astaris closure...

### Details of Astaris cleanup undecided

### Surprised EPA to finalize plans for waste monitoring for waste monitoring

10/15/01

By Emily Jones - Journal Writer

Respond to this story

POCATELLO — EPA officials, taken a bit off guard by news late last week of the Astaris facility closure, said that plans for monitoring and cleanup requirements are not yet finalized.

"This is not something we have a standard plan of attack for," Environmental Protection Agency senior advisor Gil Hasselberger said Friday.

Astaris announced Thursday it would close its Pocatello phosphate processing plant by the end of the year, changing its status under the Resource Conservation Recovery Act from an operating facility to a closed facility. When the plant closes, responsibility for cleanup will be reverted to FMC Corp.

When the facility closes, FMC will receive a post-closure permit with monitoring and cleanup requirements. Waste ponds will be monitored for 30 years, with the EPA checking the monitoring regularly. If the agency determines more monitoring is necessary, FMC could be required to monitor the ponds indefinitely. Requirements will also be set for other waste processing materials.

"What we do is go through the entire facility and look at all the areas," said site manager Linda Meyers. Meyers said the EPA will also consult with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes and Astaris before writing the permit.

While the cost of the cleanup project is not yet clear, Hasselberger said he was certain the plant did not close to avoid further environmental improvement costs.

"It's very late in the game for them to be closing to avoid environmental improvements," he said. "This is clearly all about economics."

Astaris has spent more than \$200 million in environmental improvements since 1998, causing air emissions from the plant to be cut by 95 percent, spokesman Arlen Wittrock said. Construction

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on the land disposal facility, designed to process solid waste at the plant, was halted Thursday with over \$100 million already spent on the project. Other large projects included a \$35 million carbon monoxide combuster.

"A huge amount of money has been spent on environmental improvements," he said. "It is sad that \$200 million has been spent on environmental improvements that won't be used at the end of the year."

Wittrock said FMC was committed to meeting any environmental requirements after the plant closed, and Astaris was committed to meeting requirements until then.

Local Sierra Club representative John Schmidt said he has hopes for requirements the permit will include, but at this point is more worried about the employees of the plant who have lost their jobs.

"I think we've got time to talk to people and find out what's going on. It's too early to tell where this may lead," he said. "Our concerns should be with the workers and their families. We can deal with the environmental aspect later."